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## FOCUS ON: HUMAN RIGHTS IN SADDAM'S IRAQ

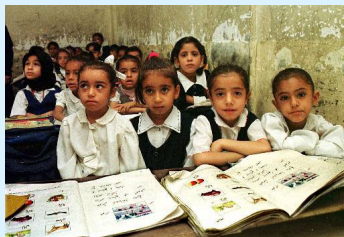
The Violent Coercion and Repression of the Iraqi People

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### ISSUE

Under the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi citizens face arbitrary execution, detention, torture, rape, religious persecution and forced relocation. They face suffering and death from chemical weapons deliberately used on civilian populations. They are systematically denied basic individual, civil, political and workers' rights as set forth in Iraq's own constitution and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Saddam's crimes against the Iraqi people span decades, with no attempt to acknowledge, investigate, or punish the alleged violators within the regime.



#### **In Saddam's Iraq, if you are a child, you could face....**

- Inadequate nutrition or medicine because Saddam refuses to order enough, or takes it for distribution to his friends
- Abduction, if you are a non-Arab living in an oil-producing area
- Having to report what your parents say about the regime
- Having your grades withheld if you fail to participate in mandatory training with the Saddam Fadayeen paramilitary youth organization

No single human rights report – by the Department of State, the United Nations, or independent monitoring organizations – can encompass the scope of human rights abuses under Saddam's regime.

The following excerpts from the 2001 State Department Human Rights Report on Iraq, the most recent, provide a glimpse of the crimes committed by the Iraqi regime against its citizens.

### ARBITRARY EXECUTION

The regime executes alleged political opponents – civilians and military, religious and tribal – without trial.

Arbitrary executions also occur as part of "prison cleansing" campaigns. An estimated 3,000 prisoners have been executed in such campaigns since 1997.

Allegations of prostitution have led to beheading of women. Such allegations are used for political purposes to intimidate opponents of the regime.

## TORTURE

A U.N. Special Rapporteur receives reports from Iraqi citizens tortured by Iraqi security officials. According to former prisoners, torture techniques include branding; electric shock; beating; rape; as well as the detention and rape of relatives of alleged suspects; the breaking of limbs and other forms of maltreatment. Torture is often videotaped in order to intimidate others.

In 2001 there were numerous reports that authorities cut out the tongues of people who had allegedly criticized Saddam Hussein. In some cases, this was performed in front of a large crowd.

## REPRESSION

Iraqi citizens who dare to resist the policies of Saddam's regime face death. Political opposition is simply not tolerated. Iraqi citizens may not assemble legally unless it is to express support for the regime. The regime controls the establishment of political parties, and monitors their activities. The regime controls all media, universities, and trade unions, as well as industry and the economy. Multiple security services maintain pervasive networks of informers to prevent dissent and instill fear in Iraqis.

Travel is restricted, and police checkpoints are common on Iraqi roads and highways. The regime monitors the activities of citizens living inside Iraq who receive remittances from relatives abroad.

Iraq's 13 million Shi'a Muslims, the majority of Iraq's population of 22 million, face severe restrictions on their religious practice. There is a ban on communal Friday prayer for Shi'a Muslims, and circulation of books from Shi'a mosque libraries. Shi'a funeral processions and media activities are all restricted by Saddam's regime.

Iraqi citizens have no right to change their government. Full political participation in government at the national level is restricted to members of the regime's Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, who constitute eight percent of the population.

**In Saddam's Iraq, if you are a woman, you could face....**

- Beheading if you are accused of prostitution
- Rape, if you are related to someone the regime thinks is disloyal
- Torture, if you are related to a dissident



Shi'a prisoners executed during the 1991 insurrection in southern Iraq.



## THE REGIME'S ATTACKS ON IRAQI CITIZENS



An Iraqi Kurdish refugee carries his daughter across a footbridge over the Tigris River to Turkey, 1991. (AP Photo/Denis Paquin)

In the 1980s, Saddam launched the “Anfal Campaign” against the predominantly Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq. The entire campaign was a gross violation of human rights, and included attacks against civilian populations, mass summary executions, disappearances, arbitrary jailing, forced displacement, and destruction of some 2,000 villages, including schools, mosques, farms, and power stations. A three-year investigation by Human Rights Watch has determined that at least 50,000 to 100,000 Iraqi Kurds died in the Anfal, leading it to conclude the regime committed genocide.

Following the 1991 insurrection in southern Iraq, an estimated 30,000 to 60,000 Shi'a were killed by regime forces. Tens of thousands of Shi'a were displaced. The U.S. and the U.K. established the northern and southern no-fly zones to protect people in these areas from annihilation by the Iraqi military's helicopter gunships.

During the 1991 Iraqi repression of the Kurdish insurrection, thousands of Iraqi Kurds died, a half million became refugees along northern Iraq's "No-Fly Zone" bordering Turkey, and 1.2 to 1.4 million other refugees fled to Iran.

Saddam has undertaken a brutal “Arabization” campaign in Iraq. Non-Arab Iraqi citizens have been forced to adopt Arabic names, under threat of having their assets expropriated and their ration cards withdrawn. Members of the Kurdish, Turkmen, and Assyrian populations have been forcibly expelled from oil-rich areas, particularly around Kirkuk and Mosul. Non-Arabs are prohibited from inheriting or buying businesses or real estate and they are routinely subject to harassment, arrest, torture and expulsion.

An estimated three to four million Iraqis have fled their country, making Iraqis the second largest refugee population in the world, after Afghans, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Iraqi exile community, according to the report, lives in fear, and high-profile Iraqi exiles have been assassinated in their countries of refuge.

**In Saddam's Iraq, if you are an Iraqi who is Chaldean Christian, Turkmen or other ethnic minority, or if you are a member of the Shi'a majority, you could face...**

- Forced relocation if you live in an area the regime wants to control or clear
- Prohibitions on your religious study and practice
- Prohibitions on the study of your language, such as Syriac, and its use in religious practice
- No protection from mob violence
- Discrimination against you in school, work, and government

## USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

The regime of Saddam Hussein has viciously used chemical weapons against Iraqi citizens. No regime since the Second World War has killed and maimed so many people through the premeditated use of chemical agents.

The regime's documented chemical attacks from 1983 to 1988 have caused over 30,000 Iraqi and Iranian deaths. The regime used mustard gas and nerve agents in these attacks against the Iraqi people.



Iraqi child victims of one of Saddam's chemical weapons attacks.

## THE WANTON DESTRUCTION OF A WAY OF LIFE

For thousands of years, Iraq's southern marshes — roughly 5,200 square kilometers — sustained tens of thousands of Arab marsh dwellers, and their unique way of life. During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, the Iraqi military systematically drained and destroyed the eastern third of the marshlands. After the 1991 Shi'a uprising, Saddam's regime began an ambitious effort to dry the entire region. Less than 10 percent of Iraq's marshes, the historic home of the Sumerian culture, remains.

U.S. Government analysts have estimated that Saddam has driven out more than 200,000 of the 250,000 former inhabitants of the marshes since 1991. In January 1995, the European parliament passed a resolution characterizing Iraq's Marsh Arabs as a persecuted minority "whose very survival is threatened by the Iraqi government." The resolution went on to describe the regime's treatment of the Marsh Arabs as "genocide."

## SADDAM'S CYNICAL CHOICES AND IRAQI SANCTIONS PROPAGANDA



Al-Shuhadah pharmacy in Baghdad.

Saddam Hussein uses Oil-for-Food money to enrich himself and his family, rather than promote the basic welfare of the Iraqi people.

Under U.N. sanctions, Iraq has always had the funds necessary to purchase food, medicines, and other humanitarian goods—without limit. It is the regime's manipulation, diversion of funds, corruption and contempt for the welfare of the Iraqi people that have prevented goods from reaching the Iraqi people.



Iraqis living under the control of the regime are not permitted to express frustration over the corruption.

Recent revision of the UN sanctions, initiated by the U.S., aims to ensure more civilian goods reach all Iraq's citizens through the normal market mechanisms.

Critics of U.S. policy towards Iraq have leveled the false charge that international economic sanctions against the regime have resulted in the deaths of thousands of Iraqi children from malnutrition or preventable diseases. These numbers, often repeated uncritically in the media, have been disavowed by United Nations organizations such as UNICEF, as well as by responsible public-health experts who have studied the sanctions issue.

The contrast between central Iraq and the northern areas of Iraq not under the regime's control is telling. Both regions are subject to the same sanctions regime. But in northern Iraq, UNICEF studies show a dramatic decrease in death rates for children under 5 since the implementation of the UN Oil-for-Food program. While some observers have cautioned that the protected northern region has received more per-capita aid, and more of it in cash, the fact is that the authorities in northern Iraq have chosen to make the health and welfare of their people their primary concern.



Surgery and children's wing of a public library in northern Iraq built with Oil-for-Food funds.

The difference is in the choices made by political leaders. Iraqis living beyond the reach of Baghdad's brutal rule have the freedom to make choices that benefit the health of their children and communities.

Were all Iraqis to have the same freedom to choose, their lives would improve immeasurably. All Iraqis deserve this better future.